

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for distributing information to a plurality of uncoordinated user stations each of which is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated servers via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

providing a distribution service that distributes updates for a plurality of different products;
and

providing a transporter software component to each of the plurality of uncoordinated user stations, wherein the transporter software component at each user station automatically effects communication sessions with the distribution service via the non-proprietary network for the purpose of obtaining updates for each of at least a subset of the plurality of different products that are installed on that user station.

2. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the plurality of different products are vended by different companies.

3. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

4. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the updates for each product installed on each user station are obtained according to a respective update schedule that is user-modifiable.

5. The method as set forth in Claim 4, wherein the respective update schedule for each product installed on each user station is customizable, so that the respective update schedules for different products can be different.

6. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the products comprise software products.

7. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the products comprise information products.

8. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the products comprise software and/or information products.

9. A method for distributing information to a plurality of uncoordinated user stations each of which is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated servers via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

providing a distribution service that distributes updates for a plurality of different products;

and

wherein each of the plurality of uncoordinated user stations is provided with transporter software that automatically effects communication sessions with the distribution service via the non-proprietary network for the purpose of obtaining updates for each of at least a subset of the plurality of different products that are installed on that user station.

10. The method as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

11. The method as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the transporter software at each user station includes a transporter software component for each product installed on that user station.

12. The method as set forth in Claim 11, wherein the transporter software component for each product installed on each user station automatically effects the communication sessions with the distribution service according to an update schedule that is user-modifiable.

13. The method as set forth in Claim 11, wherein the transporter software component for each product installed on each user station automatically effects the communication sessions with the distribution service according to an update schedule that can be different for each product installed on that user station.

14. The method as set forth in Claim 9, wherein the products comprise software products.

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of which is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated servers via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

a distribution service that distributes updates for a plurality of different products; and

5 a transporter software component at each user station that automatically effects communication sessions with the distribution service via the non-proprietary network for the purpose of obtaining updates for each of at least a subset of the plurality of different products that are installed on that user station.

24. The system as set forth in Claim 23, wherein the plurality of different products are vended by different companies.

25. The system as set forth in Claim 23, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

26. The system as set forth in Claim 23, wherein the updates for each product installed on each user station are obtained according to a respective update schedule that is user-modifiable.

27. The system as set forth in Claim 26, wherein the respective update schedule for each product installed on each user station is customizable, so that the respective update schedules for different products can be different.

28. The system as set forth in Claim 23, wherein the products comprise software products.

29. The system as set forth in Claim 23, wherein the products comprise information products.

30. The system as set forth in Claim 23, wherein the products comprise software and/or information products.

31. A system for distributing information to a plurality of uncoordinated user stations each of which is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated servers via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

a distribution service that distributes updates for a plurality of different products; and

5 wherein each of the plurality of uncoordinated user stations automatically effects communication sessions with the distribution service via the non-proprietary network for the purpose of obtaining updates for each of at least a subset of the plurality of different products that are installed on that user station.

32. The system as set forth in Claim 31, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

33. The system as set forth in Claim 31, wherein the products comprise software products.

34. The system as set forth in Claim 31, wherein the products comprise information products.

35. The system as set forth in Claim 31, wherein the products comprise software and/or information products.

36. A system for distributing information to a plurality of uncoordinated user stations each of which is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated servers via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

a distribution server that distributes updates for a plurality of different products; and

5 software resident on each of the plurality of uncoordinated user stations that can be invoked to establish a communication link with the distribution server via the non-proprietary network for the purpose of obtaining updates for each of at least a subset of the plurality of different products that are installed on that user station.

37. The system as set forth in Claim 36, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.
38. The system as set forth in Claim 36, wherein the products comprise software products.
39. The system as set forth in Claim 36, wherein the products comprise information products.
40. The system as set forth in Claim 36, wherein the products comprise software and/or information products.
41. The system as set forth in Claim 36, wherein the different products are vended by different vendors.
42. A user station, comprising:
 a storage medium;
 a plurality of different products installed on the storage medium; and
 means for automatically effectuating communication sessions with a distribution service via a non-proprietary network in order to obtain updates for each of the plurality of different products.
43. The user station as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the plurality of different products are vended by different companies.
44. The user station as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.
45. The user station as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the updates for each product are obtained according to a respective update schedule that is user-modifiable.

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46. The user station as set forth in Claim 45, wherein the respective update schedule for each product is customizable, so that the respective update schedules for the different products can be different.

47. The user station as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the products comprise software products.

48. The user station as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the products comprise information products.

49. The user station as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the products comprise software and/or information products.

50. A user station, comprising:
a storage medium;
a plurality of different products installed on the storage medium; and
transporter software installed on the storage medium for automatically effectuating communication sessions with a distribution service via a non-proprietary network in order to obtain updates for each of the plurality of different products.

51. The user station as set forth in Claim 50, wherein the plurality of different products are vended by different companies.

52. The user station as set forth in Claim 50, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

53. The user station as set forth in Claim 50, wherein the updates for each product are obtained according to a respective update schedule that is user-modifiable.

55. The user station as set forth in Claim 50, wherein the products comprise software products.

57. The user station as set forth in Claim 50, wherein the products comprise software and/or information products.

59. The user station as set forth in Claim 58, wherein the transporter software component for each product automatically effects the communication sessions with the distribution service according to an update schedule that is user-modifiable.

60. The user station as set forth in Claim 58, wherein the transporter software component for each product automatically effects the communication sessions with the distribution service according to an update schedule that can be different for each product.

61. A distribution service that distributes updates for a plurality of different products to a plurality of uncoordinated user stations via a non-proprietary network.

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is the Internet.

63. The distribution service as set forth in Claim 61, wherein each of the user stations includes means for automatically effectuating communication sessions with the distribution service for the purpose of obtaining updates from the distribution service.

64. The distribution service as set forth in Claim 61, wherein the products are software products.

65. The distribution service as set forth in Claim 61, wherein the products are information products.

66. The distribution service as set forth in Claim 61, wherein the products are software and/or information products.

67. The distribution service as set forth in Claim 61, wherein the plurality of different products are vended by different vendors.